
I know I should be talking to you about sheep but all week birds have been on my mind. I looked up the Greek word that is translated flock in our gospel reading today—the meaning is given “flock especially sheep.” I took hope in the fact that it did not say, only sheep. But I am pretty sure that I should be talking to you about sheep. But sparrows are on my mind—maybe because at the beginning of the 12th chapter of Luke Jesus says, “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight?” And just before our gospel reading Jesus says, “Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!” Birds were on Jesus’ mind that day so maybe the flock he was imagining was made up of sparrows.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Sparrows. At the slightest movement they burst into the air together. As if controlled by an unseen guidance system they move together a darting cloud changing shape but remaining one. Threatened from above by hawks, from below by cats and bullied by all the larger birds they still sing their songs and delight in living. And Jesus tells us that not one of them is forgotten by God.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Sparrows travel light. Jesus next words to us are about traveling light as well. “Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, and an unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.”

Do you think sparrows miss all the stuff? Would a sparrow trade flying free for car payments and house payments and credit card payments? Even a few coins’ weight would keep a sparrow on the ground. But God made sparrows to fly—to live day by day on what God provides. Squirrels store acorns for the winter, they survive harsh storms that leave lying dead on the ground but while sparrows live—ah, how they live.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
A little flock will be given God's kingdom. Dare we believe it could be this little flock? Dare we believe that in this world of eagles and lions, of blue jays and quarter horses, this world of swans and badgers that the eye of God is on this little flock of sparrows? Dare we believe that the Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, is hoping that we will invest our hearts and our lives in him?

When we do we are like slaves waiting for their master to return - waiting not in fear or dread but waiting in joy for our master will be waiting on us when he comes. That is what Jesus said, "The master will fasten his belt and have us, the slaves, sit down to eat and he will serve us.

Do not be afraid, little flock.

Do not be afraid.

Where would we soar if we were not afraid? Would we drive our children here and there because if we do not they might be left behind if we were not afraid? Would we do everything we can to help them become as weighed down with stuff as we are if we were not afraid? Would we take time to speak to the folks along the paths of the day - get to know them - let them know us if we were not afraid?

Do not be afraid, little flock.

Every day the world is saying to us - Be afraid. Be afraid of what terrorists can do - be afraid of what is in your water, in your food, - be afraid of someone stealing your identity - be afraid of someone getting ahead at work, be afraid of losing your job - be afraid of not getting into the college you are hoping for - be afraid.

When you and I are afraid, the world owns us. When we trust Jesus' word, God does. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Nowhere does it say that cat or hawk will not end the life of the sparrow. Every sparrow dies, every human as well. When death takes your life, God will take it back again and keep you and your life for all eternity. God did it for Jesus, God will do it for you.
But between now and then God wants to you live. To soar. To travel light. To fly together and trust. Do not be afraid.